

February Extended Article

A working conversation about student voice with Joseph Harris and Carly Baldwin:

This year, I am collaborating with Carly Baldwin, a teacher at Boyd County High School, on projects that integrate student voice into the classroom. Using student voice tools means we no longer guess or wonder what our students think of a lesson, unit or our classroom climate. Instead, we use data from the paper/pencil versions of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES) Student Voice Survey and other tools such as a [post assessment survey](#) to enter into complex conversations with students about how we can work together to create a better learning experience for all who walk through our doors.

In a recent working conversation, I asked Carly a few questions about student voice:

Q: How might teachers use the data from the PGES Student Voice Survey to improve classroom climate?

A: I want to know if students feel safe in my classroom, if they are supported and if they feel like they can trust me. I don't have to wait for the official KDE Student Voice Survey window to open to find out the answers to those questions. I can use the official questions and do a student voice survey at any time! Then, I can reflect and modify our classroom climate based on their results.

Q: How might teachers prepare students for the official Student Voice Survey?

A: The official survey results do not need to be a surprise. Teachers practice formative assessment all the time, and reflect and modify instruction based on results. I realize that I also can extend my formative assessment techniques to ask about classroom climate and culture. That way, when the official survey window opens, no matter what class they survey, I already know about the strengths and weaknesses of my classroom climate and have done what I can to better them.

Q: How do you integrate student voice into your classroom?

A: I try to integrate student voice all of the time. After the end of the lesson, students will often complete a plus/delta check: one thing I understand (plus) and one question I still have (delta). After summative assessments, students also will complete a survey about the unit. What did they like? What could I change? It makes reflecting and implementing change for the next time I teach that unit more effective and authentic.

I also am integrating more effective domain questions into my academic questionnaires. If my students do not think my classroom is a safe place for learning, teaching chemistry isn't going to be possible.

Q: What does student voice mean to you?

A: Student voice is a recent educational buzzword, but it really just gives a term to the student-centered classroom that I want to establish and maintain. Students need to have input, and the curriculum and the climate should change based on their viewpoints. When students have a voice in their education, they become active learners. This teaches them how to promote change in their school and in their future.

Integrating student voice into the classroom has allowed me to learn more about my students and about how to better reach them, and it can do the same for all teachers. We are collaborating to create more student voice tools that teachers might use to not only grow but also to create positive change in their classroom climates and learning environments. Additionally, these tools can be included as other sources of evidence alongside their PGES Student Voice Survey. Some tools have already been created and Kentucky teachers have piloted their use. These tools include:

- [Learning Style Inventories](#)
- [Reflection Tickets](#)
- [Grading Period Survey](#)

I will continue to create more student voice and choice tools which will be housed on [Authentically Integrating Student Voice](#). Also, Carly is working on her own project through the [CTEPS](#) program which centers on generating avenues for student voice by using “[Genius Hour](#)”.

Teachers who are interested in sharing student voice and choice ideas from their classrooms should tweet to @studentvoiceKY and @GingeraffeBald1 for a shout-out and to be featured on the classroom spotlight space of our sites.